



University of Iowa

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Writing Sample

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Includes "Hand-written manuscript," "Dusk," "On the eighth day," "Early spring," "A thaw," "Anaxagoras's sky," and "A hawk."

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Hand-written manuscript

peatbog of autumn _ ever shorter breath of poplars,
gray alders; dwarf light, pale bonsai
latched onto the midday current;
the wind flicks at the smouldering flakes,
the debris of leaves lost in a roll
of metal mesh, as if, soundlessly, it were assembling
foreign words, feeling out
the thickening of nerves, hollowed-out syllables
under the rime

Dusk

dark splash of a crow in a swell of silence

and the smell, as if ground up in the mouth: from sopping
in the browned sap of October potato stalks, fizzing
autumn must drenched with smoke;
the litter of leaves, not yet raked from under the birches, rots.
Not much left of the day, the rift healed,

fire in the field
its skeleton wind

1.
pre-dawn silence cuts to the quick, the wait,
till the wind returns at least and clouds collect soot, through the cracks
light is blown;

until it flashes, even though only a spoon resting on a saucer, scattered
papers, bedding. And a dry fire will catch
on the extinguished wood of things exposed

2.
ripped to ribbons, light trusses up the trees; water in entrails of smoke,
it is dawning. The sun is but a crack
in the cast-iron vat filled with fire _

rain in the grooves of the iced-over hours, falls through skin
and blood, as if I died long ago and the body

were no obstacle; the varnish of loveless nights
darkens. Houses wade into the mud of shore fog
and your voice, from where there is a crumbling joint
in the wall
picked apart brick by brick. The island barely glowing,

this lowered down
multi-armed spider at the end of a long rope, a stone
candelabrum. And a small harbor:
slung from the bottom of the dome
dreaming fires, jostled by the gust,
by rain; in an open _ in every direction _
aisle

On the eighth day

River, its burned-through trunk on a bank of the snowed-over town.
Trees, as if they had walked through fire, snow
scorched black with them; crows over the ice-floe of red roofs
like smoke-fall from a hidden fire.

Returned to look for a lost glove;
the wind rose, but passed the people by,
obstacles in the air, not too high.
Like a floating net, the sky was filling up, later to dry out
stretched on the poles of evening light.

Looked into a small sun fished off the bottom,
into the locked gills,
when the wind shifted and _ it hit Him, and blew
as if it found a clearing
a line of snow and night _ sun like a day-dreaming stone,
reddish porphyry, under the apron of glass rubble,
waste, sliding down, piling up ellipses

over the horizon; a desert rim
of a January day, frost-covered air. Birches

chalked on snow, left to the rains.
The crows circle, stirred up
by the engine noise.

Ice has fed long on water and on the marrow of days, taking possession
of windows round an unheated veranda; things cooled down
and each unto its form

ready to be taken out.
Ice-dust sparkles, the balcony dredged down, out of nowhere _
as if a snow bridge staggered in the sun, up
above an invisible rift

we ran into the shaggy shadow of an oak, with the dog, in a full February moon.
And we were like magpies

in a scorched snow-hole, like trout
thrown amidst crushed ice

**

Early spring

An monocle of ice over the cracked pond.
At last, after the stiff, leaden days _
trying the fit of shadows.
Sewing them to everything: to rose stumps
in the garden and eyelashes, and garages. Elongating,
pruning, by the underclothes flapping in the sun-
draft.
Laying white covers on the lumps of houses,
onto people.

A down-flow over the hummocks
of rafts, heavy with snow

...

the sea grandiose _ up to the dunes, with lips

close to the skin of the wind, still, as if this one were half
its being; steep
empty saddles of waves, touched by light, which already
turns, sliding out, leaving
a blinding hitch;

gulls, wrapped around by wind, pushed away into the depths
of a saltier crypt, where sleet is spilling _ clouds
like pews, steel-gray,
against the wall of a horizon (a prayer with no words,
with no tomorrow)

...

shackles of rime in the ditch: nothing broken through,
nor sneaked past (unless under ground, in water
brim full of naked sky); the brook flooded over,
the field half frozen and the wind routs jagged dust
from furrows disappearing somewhere under the ice.
The day _ a skein of spider-webs
tucked into the sky; life colonized
conquered. Leached by the frost, as light as
the husk of an overgrowth on stone; to live, unlike leaves,
to live, the wind wheezes ... And death should be
like the snow that shields Earth
from a complete seizure by ice

A thaw

as if the weight of a branch breaking, peeling the bark away, exposed
the pap of a living tree _

the twilight; flat shards enter the thawing pond,
pour over the gate and the roof of an empty greenhouse.
Bark on the trunk of night drying out
and cracking _ from the ground up to the base of its canopy,
and the rot's phosphorence.
But the hues take on deepnesses, turn glistening, clearer,
as if life were just about to begin.

Veins open in the snow, full of clotted grasses, sand,
burgeoning loams _

crows sup from them

...

deep snowed-over banister by the stairs _ on it
is left the imprint of your hand; an ever ageing sun, its

March tongue, unrelenting,
between your fingers...

*

1.
Maritime waste.
Fish-bones of a port dumped on the horizon.

Light between cloud and snow _ a narrow stream
meandering up
and down, like an empty elevator. Drifting white of the days, the hospital nights
and a black crack in the snowy cap, which
cannot be passed by.

We are sliding down off a covered edge,
off iced-up steps, in our attempt to go out onto a pier, collapsed
half way along, rotting through.
Going back, we watch wild, frozen gardens on the escarpment,
on the window-panes of the cottage _
a map, which death adopts, exact
and beautiful

2.
At times, in late spring,
the snow falls on the thawed soil
and it melts, warmed in its own heat; the ice kernel
melting

in the open shell of the bay

in many different ways we spelled out the word love,
tending to one another and the garden _
for over an hour, rooks have been the sole listeners;
we are planting shrubs _ at October's end,
and your confidence, that they will take root before the frost,
is almost unaffected.

In a year there will be currants, like a picture
out of a mail-order catalogue _ assuming that the shoots take
and in the
spring
nothing gnaws at the buds from among leaves.
Assuming the butterflies pass them by, their grassgreen offspring.
In the nostrils we have the smell of dug-up soil, once dirtied up
we step down towards the pond, along the dip of a hill, its reflection

pulsing in waves,
and settling behind the reeds _ as though drawn on a
transparency _
onto the cracked valley floors under the stars;

the day has already wrinkled and furled, like a leaf
in animal's feeding ground _ and the tissue of the thunder-struck hours
crumbles away;
smoke visible in the garden, father bustling with a rake

*

Anaxagoras's sky

the perennials dry up. A wave of whale hills
spill beyond the river _ the shallows of the field, bog-meadow; close by,
right on shore, in the chilled water
there lie alder cones, a dune of thick gravel,
of pebbles, full of quick, hard glints.
And cloud rubble, as if plowed out of the dark loams, layered higher,
under the surface _
I put my hand in the water, into its capable snare,
feeding grounds for Gerridae;

the sky in the cuff of a bay, sheltered from the current, pushing up willow roots
by the shore (the sky, as if heaped from stones
that might topple

were their flight slower)

A hawk

the wool of water crumpled by a cold wind, heavy, navy blue,
ripped across; a rapacious wallop of wings
far from shore _ the lake flashes a steel blade
in the sun;

blood, materia prima. And it rakes
its abyss blindly, spilling over,
choking